



Have Heart by everybreatheverymove

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Summary: "You own my heart." - To be told she's been given his heart to hold is a daunting, beautiful thing.

Have Heart

"I love you."

"Like, you... *like* me?"

She's heard it before, in one of those soap operas Hopper always tells her to turn off. He says they're garbage, that they're rotting her brain. But she likes to think that maybe they've taught her things Hopper can't.

"Like, I, uh," Mike pauses, but he doesn't quite stop.

He makes a little noise, scratches at the back of his neck in a way that lets Eleven know he's nervous. He gets jumpy, twitchy when he's anxious, she reminds herself. "Like, you-"

"Yes?" El's voice is soft, patient, and she tucks stray curls behind her ears, refusing to lift her eyes from off of his lips.

He frowns, gaze lowering onto the blanket of the basement floor, and he takes a deep breath before saying, "Like, you... You own my heart."

His eyes don't reach hers, and El is a little dismayed. "Oh."

"But, uh, you know, it's fine that you don't feel it, too. Okay?" He nods, suddenly a little less bashful, "I get it. It's just, I wanted to tell you and Nancy- Nancy said that I should because it's important. You should tell people if you love them, and I do."

"Mike?"

He looks up, eyes wide and expectant, and she's unable to help the smile that graces her face, the slight blush that rises to her cheeks. "Yeah?"

She's too busy counting the freckles littered, sprayed out across his face (again) to answer him now, too busy trying to think of any other living thing that could possibly share the color of his eyes. She can't imagine anything that could, would ever compare. His eyes are of a

certain kind of darkness, muddy brown and kind and wise as though he's experienced more in his fourteen years than most could ever even begin to understand.

She knows he takes everything to heart, literal. She knows he likes to be in control of things, likes to take charge and be the brains behind an operation. She knows he likes being a leader (and that he's good at it), but she thinks that maybe it takes a toll on him sometimes.

He takes others' problems and makes of them his own struggles. He takes the weight from off of others' shoulders and forces it upon his own. He takes others' pain and suffers in their place.

Hopper says he's a solemn kid and, while she isn't sure what that word means exactly, she thinks that maybe she kind of understands its significance.

Mike Wheeler likes being the leader, the paladin, the go-to for the rest of the party. He likes being the one with most of the answers, the one the rest of them can turn to if they're in need.

He's taken their friendship, accepted their unwavering love, earned their respect and their trust. He's built himself around his friends, carved his heart out of love and devotion.

To be told she's been given *his* heart to hold is a daunting, beautiful thing.

"You own my heart, too." She enunciates every word, offers just the gentlest of smiles.

"I do?"

El nods, clear, and she reaches forward to grab his hands, curling her fingers around his own, stopping his nervous tics. She bites at the inside of her bottom lip, watching as his surprise turns to absolute relief.

Without so much as the flick of her head, she rolls down the checkered sheet hanging from the edge of the table, stuffed beneath a heavy binder, and the material falls down to barricade them into the makeshift fort.

The sheet sways softly, and El raises her hands to his face then, his cheekbones sharp beneath her palms, and she smooths her thumbs just below his eyes, wondrous and enchanted.

(It'll never fail to amaze him how she can look at him with just as much adoration and awe as he does her; as though he's the one forged from fallen constellations.)

"Promise."

He's carved his heart out of love and devotion, and just a little bit of magic.

(And who is she to deny the importance of magic?)